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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ'S "UNITED SOCIALIST PARTY" TO ELECT PARTY
LEADERSHIP ON NOVEMBER 15

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBIN D. MEYER,
FOR REASON 1.4(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: President Chavez has restarted his United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) electoral machine by calling for internal party elections on November 15. The party officials elected will be responsible for selecting candidates for the 2010 National Assembly (AN) and town council elections at the upcoming PSUV Party Congress. Mayor of Libertador municipality Jorge Rodriguez, Chavez's campaign strategist in the past two national elections, is spearheading the party balloting process, along with PSUV Vice President and AN President Cilia Flores. While Chavez will personally appoint 20 percent of the PSUV Congress delegates, the possibility of broad participation of the PSUV grassroots in an open election process will doubtless be highlighted as a stark contrast to the backroom politicking of the opposition parties in the selection of their leadership. End Summary.

PSUV FAITHFUL TO ELECT 80 PERCENT OF PARTY DELEGATES

¶2. (SBU) On October 29, the PSUV formally presented to the National Electoral Council (CNE) its list of 7,788 candidates who are running for the party's Extraordinary Congress, which will take place from November 21 through December 13. During the internal party election on November 15, which will involve 1,492 voting sites, 772 delegates will be selected from this list. PSUV campaign strategist and Mayor of Libertador municipality Jorge Rodriguez announced that 2.5 million voters registered with the PSUV have a right to vote on November 15, and that the CNE would have the results within a few hours after the end of the voting day.

¶3. (SBU) Rodriguez announced October 21 that the PSUV National Committee had decided to "grant confidence" to Chavez to personally select 20 percent of the delegates who will participate in the Party Congress. He said the decision was to give Chavez the chance to select candidates of "a broad revolutionary trajectory" and added that Chavez would personally preside over the Party Congress.

¶4. (SBU) AN President Cilia Flores publicly lauded the PSUV October 29 for its planned internal elections, pointing out that "other political parties" do not consult their base in the same democratic way. She noted that 70,501 Socialist "patrols" ("patrullas") in each municipality had assisted with the nominations to the Party Congress. State-owned media reports claim that at least 100,000 patrols have been established around the country. In previous campaigns, patrols have been tasked with "getting out the vote" -- each member accepts responsibility for bringing 20 voters to the

polls.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Chavez has long used the strategy of the "eternal campaign" to maintain enthusiasm and cohesion among his electoral base. Flores' implicit criticism of the lack of transparency in the way the opposition parties select their leadership resonates among the opposition faithful, who have privately complained to Poloff about the "old boy" networks. End Comment.

DUDDY